(b) whether the above factory has completed 50 year of its existence;

(c) the details of various programmes being organised during the golden jubilee year;

(d) whether the Management has taken steps to honour those who are responsible for its programme on the occasion of its golden jubilee; and

(e) whether the Government has conferred 'Navaratna' status on its golden jubilee year?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) The total number of employees including officers working in Bharat Electronics Limited, Bangalore as on 30.6.2003 is 13,717.

(b) No, Sir. The Company will complete 50 years of its existence on 21st April, 2004.

(c) The Company is organizing various cultural and sports activities during the golden jubilee year. It has planned to support/help deserving orphanages, schools for the blind/handicapped and other organisations as considered fit during the year. Seminars and exhibitions have also been planned to publicise the technological advances made by the Company.

(d) Yes, Sir.

(e) No, Sir.

Landmine casualties in Rajasthan

1810. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the landmines have claimed 113 victims in Sriganganagar district of Rajasthan during the 15 months of the military mobilisation since December, 2001;

(b) whether there were even agricultural losses and villagers returning home were not sure that their fields and grazing pastures have been entirely demined; and

(c) if so, what steps are being taken by Government to make demining a cent per cent success?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) As per report received from the State Government of Rajasthan landmines laid during the military mobilisation have claimed 124 victims in the Sriganganagar District of Rajasthan.

(b) Due to mobilisation of the Indian Army since December, 2001, agricultural crops in the border areas have been affected. Prior to handing over fields to the villagers, all efforts are made to ensure that the area is fully demined and safe for use.

(c) Demining operation, is an extremely hazardous and time consuming operation, which is undertaken in a systematic manner by resorting to a combination of manual, mechanical & explosive means and by adopting hundred percent safety precautions.

MiG-23 accidents

1811. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is fact that MiG-23s have higher accident rate than MiG-21s;

(b) if so, whether the accident rate of MiG-23s per 10,000 hours of flying is the highest in the IAF fleet;

(c) the reasons for not phasing out of the ageing MiG-23s by Government; and

(d) whether Government have made any investigation to find out why MiG-23s are prone to accident?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) In some years the accident rate of MiG-23 aircraft has been higher than MiG-21 aircraft.

(b) In some years the accident rate of MiG-23 aircraft has been the highest in the IAF fleet.

(c) A gradual phasing out of the MiG-23 fleet is being carried out